IV

THE TWILIGHT

EVERY student of antiquity feels the difference between the Greek world as we know it in the fifth century B.C. and as we find it in the two or three generations that follow the death of Socrates. Whether we turn to historian or to philosopher—for we shall hardly find a poet—the impression is the same. Something has gone; the ideals are different; men mistrust the future. Athens, Sparta and Thebes have had their great days, their span of rule; and, after all, the real arbiter of Greece is the Persian King. The last words of Xenophon's history, the *Hellenica,* stay in our minds. "After the battle (of Mantineia) confusion and disorder were greater than before in Greece. So far let my story go; what follows shall perchance be another's care." By 362 B.C. Xenophon was an old man; he had seen one Greek power after another fall; and no one knew what to do; unless perhaps his old fellow-citizen, Isocrates, were right and the future lay neither with a democracy, nor with an oligarchy, but with a king. Xenophon drew the picture of a king in his *Agesilaus* as Isocrates had drawn another in Evagoras; Greek both of them. And all the time we, who look back on the story, know that the future did lie with kings and not with Greek kings. We are warned by modern historians not to think too gloomily of the fourth century. Beloch will not allow us to believe it on Thucydides' word that the Peloponnesian War demoralized the Greeks;[1] even in the early years of that war the

[1] He seems to refer to Thucydides, iii, 82.

historian tells us of facts that disprove it—"the war only unfettered the passions, which had slept during the preceding years of peace".[1] Holm urges that the supposed degeneracy is impossible; there was, however, deviation from the old paths promoted by sophistry and rhetoric, but Democracy was not a factor of decay in Athens but rather a force for the moral preservation of the city.

It is worth while to turn back to the passage of Thucydides. "The whole Hellenic world was in commotion; in every city the chiefs of the democratic factions, and of the few, were struggling, the one to bring in the Athenians, the other the Lacedaemonians. Now in time of peace they would have had no excuse for introducing either and no desire to do so; but when they were at war and both sides could easily obtain allies, the dissatisfied party were only too ready to invoke foreign aid. Revolution brought upon Hellas many terrible calamities, such as have been and always will be while human nature remains the same. In peace and prosperity both states and individuals are actuated by higher motives (or, conceivably, have better judgments) because they do not fall under the dominion of imperious necessities; but war takes away the comfortable provision of daily life, and is a violent teacher, and creates in most people a temper that matches their conditions."

In spite of Beloch's reminder of dark deeds done in the early years of war, it is hard not to feel that Thucydides is right. There is this, too, to remember, that Beloch and most of our scholars wrote before the European war of our own day. As one looks back upon that, the retrospect of Thucydides, returned from long exile, upon a Greece ruined by twenty-seven years of war, carries with it conviction. War is a violent schoolmaster, reckless and headlong, and

[1] Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte,* vol. i.

gives his character to all his pupils, winners and losers. Shallow critics remark a certain cynicism in Thucydides, which I cannot accept. They might quote this passage with its sad hint that peace and prosperity affect our conduct and motives, but hardly change underlying character. Ancient historians say little of economic questions, but Thucydides glances here at an economic factor—the comfortable provision of daily life. We have seen, at least in Europe, what the disappearance of that involves. So human nature, stripped of the comforts of peace, breaks loose. "The cause of all these evils was the love of power originating in avarice and ambition, and the party-spirit engendered by them, when men are fairly engaged in a contest. For the leaders in the cities used specious names; some would plead political equality for the masses under the law, and the others the wisdom of an aristocracy. They committed the most monstrous crimes, yet even these were surpassed by the magnitude of their revenges; both alike made the caprice of the moment their law. . . . Thus revolution gave birth to every form of wickedness." Human nature, war, passion, faction, and the daily food—all are militating against civil life. Of all forms of government, Democracy, as the speech of Pericles suggests, asks the most of its citizens; Democracy, least of all, can exist where passion, revenge, and hunger are making men reckless of everything that counts in civilization. Man ill-educated, says Plato, is the most savage of earthly creatures;[1] and thirty years of war are not a good education.

War may be at least for one of the parties to it inevitable. No sane person could apply that adjective to the Sicilian expedition voted in 416 by the Athenians. It was aggression; and, though Thucydides says that with wise leadership it

[1] Plato, *Laws*, 766.

could have been successful, it was folly. Mr. F. M. Cornford in his brilliant book *Thucydides Mythistoricus* advances a general theory of the historian and his work which I know of no one accepting; but he brings out most vividly certain things that we are apt to miss. Think of the phrases —"love sick with a fatal passion for what is out of reach," [1] "few things are turned into success by desire," [2] "a passion fell on all to sail forth . . . a longing for far-off sights and scenes," [3] "a desire for more;" [4] think of the words in the Greek—*Eros Elpis Epithumia Pothos oregesthai;* this was the spirit in which the war was carried on and the fatal expedition was launched by Demos. The ancients have handed down to us the story of Assyria, ever desirous of more, a strong military power ambitious of dominating the whole earth, wrecked at last by years of attempting too much. We have read of the great reign of Louis XIV ending in loss and crippled strength as the result of the same ambition. We all think of another case. Every people realizes the folly of another people thinking it can indefinitely add province to province, find men and money to crush all resistance, and spread itself out so thin as to cover the globe, and yet escape the consequences of the weakness that follows over-straining of powers. Athenian Demos fell into the common temptation of Kings and Kaisers and financial oligarchs.

Before I began to write these lectures, two reflections were in my mind as I thought of Athens and other democracies. Nations break down abroad, but they are ruined at home. It is foreign policy that finds out the weakness of our theories. Aristotle criticizes the political ideas of

[1] Thucydides, vi, 13.
[2] Thucydides, vi, 13.
[3] Thucydides, vi, 24.
[4] Thucydides, vi, 21.

Phaleas of Chalcedon—his institutions "are chiefly designed to promote the internal welfare of the state; but the legislator should consider also its relation to neighbouring nations and to all who are outside of it." [1] Phaleas had much to say about equality of property when he sketched his ideal; he expected it to "take away from a man the temptation to be a highwayman because he is hungry or cold." Hunger and cold we all understand more or less; if those were the only problems of government, we might have found Aristotle less uncongenial to us in his discussion of the artisan as citizen. But he lays his finger on the spot; Utopias are wrecked on foreign policy. It is very hard to understand this, and what is equally true—that in the long run every problem is linked up with foreign policy, in a world where every conceivable state has frontiers and neighbours beyond them, and where as to-day nobody is far away. But a breakdown in foreign policy betrays weakness at home—some failure to realize and to understand, some defect in training or temper, something intellectually or morally wrong, undeveloped or perverted.

The failure of the Sicilian expedition brought the Persian once more on to the Mediterranean. He had been kept off the seas, as we saw, by the Athenian fleet, and now Athens ruled the seas no more, and he returned to play one Greek power off against another. We need not follow events in any detail. It was Persian subsidies and ships that at last gave Sparta her victory in 404; it was Persian money and a Persian victory that restored the walls of Athens in 393. Six years later the King's Peace made it plain to everybody who it was that controlled, if he did not rule, every Greek city round the Aegaean. The old antithesis of 479 still held; whatever hopes Greek oligarchs or

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, ii, 7, 14.

democrats might cherish of a city of their own, governed by themselves, of being *autopolitan,* no city was or could be isolated, every city must look to the hegemony, the suzerainty, of some Greek power or the undisguised rule of Persia. They had tried a democratic suzerainty, and it broke down; Sparta's attempt was far more helpless and hopeless from the start; so, failing Athens, Persia was in control—a monarchic power over oligarchies and democracies alike.

The Greek republic had broken down all round. Greek war was always savage, as we saw in the comment of Mardonius, and Greek faction was, if anything, more savage still. Broadly, in the two hundred and fifty cities in the Athenian confederacy, there was for the seventy years of its duration little revolution. There were revolts, as we know, but the Athenian maintenance of democracies left revolution little chance. The war, as Thucydides tells us, and especially the fall of Athens, gave faction its opportunity. We read of revolution in the cities before the Persian War; the story goes on after the fall of Athens, all through the fourth century, and Polybius in the second century lets us see the grim old business still in process—the war of faction and neighbour—till Rome took away all their liberties, and ended their wars forever in "the boundless majesty of Roman peace." [1] If it can be urged that the wars and factions of the early Greek states contributed something to the Greek spirit and really helped to develop Greek genius, it cannot be said of them after the fall of Athens. From then onwards they meant less and less, and did nothing but weaken and dis-spirit the Greek people. No wonder the old centres of Greek life were gradually depopulated; no wonder men of spirit threw over the wretched little city-state for careers of sense and peace in the new

[1] Pliny, *Natural History,* xxvii, 1, *immensa Romanae pacis majestate.*

foundations of the kings eastward and the manifold life without politics of the growing Roman world westward.

We know from our own experience how war dislocates trade and ruins industry. So we say, in our abstract style. What it really does is to destroy property, to divert men from useful employment, to pervert the spirit of enterprise. When peace at last returned to the Greek world on the victory of Sparta, there had been twenty-seven years of war. In a striking passage Isocrates sums up what the wars of Athenian imperialists had cost—"they met with more and greater disasters in the period of empire than ever befell the city in all time. To Egypt sailed two hundred triremes and were lost with all their crews, round Cyprus one hundred and fifty. In Datum they lost ten thousand hoplites of their own and their allies, in Sicily forty thousand men and two hundred and forty triremes, and finally on the Hellespont two hundred triremes. Incidental losses of ten, or five, or more triremes, and of men one or two thousand at a time, who could number?" [1] Old families, he adds, were extinguished and their places taken by foreigners. Even if antipathy to imperialist ambitions leads Isocrates to some heightening of phrase, it is plain that in ships and men Athens lost terribly; and all the time war and the necessity of building warships turned the dockyards from the production of merchantmen. It is true that Athens' geographical position in the centre of the Greek world, her harbours and the conservatism of commerce gave her back a fair measure of prosperity far more quickly than could have been expected. Ships had to take goods for exchange to some emporium, and they went to the Peiraieus once more and were welcome.

But the effects of war upon industry are manifold and

[1] Isocrates, *On the Peace*, 86.

intricate. We shall do best to survey in outline the main occupations of Athenians and try to form some judgment upon the situation left by the war and then upon its effects in government and in theories of government and of life.

Allusion has been made to shipping, so we may start there. Echoes of the dockyard reach us in literature. Fleet after fleet is not built without concentration of effort and energy. One supposes that the shipwrights who built ships of war were qualified to build merchant vessels, and that, while not at all exempt from the general consequences of the war and the defeat, the shipwrights were among the first people to recover. The crew of a warship was presumably larger than that of a *holkas* or merchant ship. What became of the men who manned the navy during the eleven years following the battle of Aegospotami, we can only conjecture. That the Spartans killed a lot of them or left them to drown is not a malignant guess from Spartan character. They very possibly sold others into slavery, as they did some of Xenophon's Ten Thousand. Many must have dispersed, and quite probably many Athenian sailors were on the Persian fleet which won the battle of Cnidos in 393, the victory which led to the rebuilding of the walls. General shipping, if we may judge from the speeches that survive from law trials of a half century, gradually revived and would absorb some of the men from the old war-fleets.

With the armies of Greece it was different. We saw the old way of warfare—the two bands of heavy-armed hacking one another to pieces on the fair plot of ground, work that called for muscle and passion perhaps a good deal more than for skill. The Peloponnesian War saw great changes in the art of war. The discovery made by the Athenian general Demosthenes, first in disaster and then

in success, that light-armed troops had a significant part to play, altered the character of war. It meant a new style of manoeuvre, a new necessity for training, and a complete re-thinking of all military principles. The last was only slowly done, but we see its outcome in the victories of Alexander the Great. In the meantime light-armed troops grew in importance, and there was small place among them for the raw recruit or the amateur; it was not the clumsy work of an old hoplite battle. The hoplite had of course to be drilled to some extent, the light-armed elaborately. The troop must be able to run together over any and every kind of ground, and to wheel abruptly, to retire in order and sometimes in disorder that at the proper distance proved to be order again. Probably their weapons involved more practice too. In any case a troop of light-armed was a unit of highly trained men, and their work was manoeuvre rather than straightforward massacre. There were still things they could not do, but which they might yet thwart the hoplites in doing. The hoplite force then had to have further training to be able to deal with the light-armed. Variety was introduced into battle, into warfare generally, and thus into the training of every soldier and pre-eminently of the commander. This meant a certain professionalism. If the light-armed were very frequently mercenaries from Thrace or elsewhere, their reaction on the average Greek soldier was none the less immense. The war lasted off and on twenty-seven years; and from what we have seen in our own time, the training, we may guess, was more intensive and developed as the years dragged on. The forces of all the states concerned had in most cases abruptly to adjust themselves to peace, without preparation —trained soldiers, untrained in agriculture or industry; and they had nothing to do. Their one trade of fighting was in

theory not required, but they had no other; they were bound to be soldiers somewhere or other, wherever they could find pay.

The mercenary soldier is then a permanent and an outstanding figure in the fourth century. Soldiering becomes a trade, first because old soldiers had no other, and gradually because supply can create demand. The sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done. A community, unwilling to fight in person, may be willing to engage in war to the detriment of its neighbours, when the fighting force can be hired without difficulty. Even if paying it is harder than hiring it, something will turn up. So the profession of mercenary soldier flourished till the Roman imposed peace. But periodically, or perhaps uniformly, the mercenary was a problem. Two great facts will illuminate the matter. When prince Cyrus rebelled against his brother, the Persian king, he had no difficulty in enrolling the Ten Thousand—more exactly about thirteen thousand; he did not at once tell them whom they were to fight or where, or they might not have come; but he got them, as we all know. When Alexander marched against the Persian Empire seventy years later, it has been calculated that one hundred thousand Greek mercenaries were serving Darius in one or another capacity. For those seventy years, one of the great problems of Greece was what to do with mercenary soldiers. Isocrates constantly alludes to them—now it is "men without cities, runaway slaves, a congeries of every kind of villainy, who will always desert for more pay", and Athens has to put up with and palliate every outrage they commit, her own citizens are short of the means of life, and she has to look on and see her allies taxed and plundered to pay "the common enemies of mankind";[1] and again he com-

[1] *On the Peace*, 44-46.

miserates men compelled to live in exile and from sheer poverty required to die fighting their friends on behalf of their enemies.[1] Xenophon, always kindly, gives a more attractive account of his old companions in general, but his narrative shows their real character. Isocrates pleaded for colonization, for a great Greek crusade against Persia; if Philip of Macedon would undertake it, he would find it easy to raise troops—"and greater and stronger forces from among wanderers than from among men domiciled in cities." [2]

The devastation of Greece helped to turn men away from the land to the wandering life of the mercenary. What had happened elsewhere, we are not so precisely told, but it is easy to guess. In Attica ten years of enemy occupation had ruined agriculture. Now it is true, as Adam Smith drily said, when he was told in 1777 that England was ruined, that "there is a lot of ruin in a nation". Of course all the live-stock was gone,[3] but if you can find or borrow an ox, or draw it yourself with your wife guiding it, the plough can go over the ground where the enemy pitched, and in some months some sort of crop can be raised. But as we read in the lately found historian known from Oxyrrhyncus the place of his discovery, the Spartan army of occupation had pillaged and destroyed everything; even the tiles of the cottage roofs had been sold cheap to the Thebans.[4] Where was the farmer to house himself and his family, till the wheat grew? But his staple had not been and was not to be wheat. For two centuries it had been more and more the olive and the vine; and an olive tree takes some eighteen years to reach its best fertility. The

[1] *Panegyric*, 168.
[2] *Philip*, 96.
[3] Thucydides, vii, 27.
[4] *Hell. Oxyrrh.*, 12, 3, 4.

farm people had had to live in the city, as best they could, and do other things. No doubt a proportion of them gradually got back to the land and the old life. But we learned from Aristotle that a change in the proportions of the State affects its character, and the war made that change in Athens. If the farmers are, as Aristotle said, the best and safest element in the State, then the result of the war and its changes will be a worse democracy.

Industry also had suffered. Athens from Solon's day onward had been one of the great manufacturing centres, probably the greatest, of Greece. She had come to depend more with time on slave labour, not wholly but largely, and, even before Deceleia was occupied by the Spartans, "more than twenty thousand slaves had run away, a large proportion of them artisans (χειροτέχναι)".[1] A story is told, by Xenophon, about a man with fourteen refugee women relatives in his house, all idle and quarrelsome; and how Socrates suggested to him to set them weaving, and so to silence their tongues and fill their mouths; and how successful the experiment was. Years after this—half a century later—in 355 B.C., Isocrates says the great problem in Athens is want; with the larger part of the people the chief interest in life is how to live *this* day.[2] To keep the democracy going at all, payment had to be made for attendance not merely in the Law Courts but in the sovereign Ecclesia itself. Payment of representatives is called a modern democratic device; here it was paying the People itself to rule.

I have already hinted however that in one phase of life Athens recovered surprisingly quickly. She had been and she remained what the Greeks called the ἐμπόριον of Greece —the centre of business and the centre of distribution. It

[1] Thucydides, vii, 27.
[2] *Areopagiticus*, 83.

is familiar (or was so before the war) that in the modern world certain trades centre in specific places. It would be shorter to send goods from the producer to the consumer direct, but it is less convenient. As a result the crops of the world—say the tea crops—are taken to one or two places, and to these places every wholesale dealer comes to buy and to distribute. The harbours of Athens remained and the tradition, and Athenians were quick to see the value of it. As a pamphleteer of our period says, everything attracted commerce to the Peiraieus; you can unload your ship quickly, very quickly and without delay or demurrage get a new freight; or if you prefer you can take silver, with the sure knowledge that Athenian drachmas, with the familiar owl on them, are everywhere accepted at par. If agriculture and industry were crippled, there was more and more work around the docks, loading and unloading, ship-building and repairing—another emphasis on one particular section of the population with obvious results. Ship-building may under good conditions be a more or less stable trade; ship-repairing, loading and unloading evidently depend on seasons and on weather. A spell of bad weather will hold up work; a sudden return of fair winds fills the harbour with ships running in that were held up, and there is a wild demand for labour. I always feel that moderns, who echo too faithfully the complaints of Demosthenes that Athenians would not undertake military training and military service, forget the docks and the weather, and only imperfectly realize that Commerce will not wait about for drill-sergeants. Have we forgotten Corinth, the oligarchic trading centre on the Isthmus, with all the advantages of two seas three miles apart, and a shiproad for trolleying merchantmen from one sea to the other? We need not here digress to banking, which was bound up with the

gathering of merchants from everywhere. It was not the profession we know in England, or that in Rome maintained the work of the government; but its flourishing in Athens is an index to international trade.

Let us try to sum up what we have reached as regards Athens; and let us remember that Athens was not all Greece, but that, in spite of Sparta, and with proper reservations, we may take the general experience of Athens as illustrative of the rest of Greece. The fourth century shows us a crippled people, suffering from all the losses of life and property that a long and savage war had brought, and from all the less traceable but not less real losses, that follow disappointment and the belief that energy and effort will be more or less futile. The old, old handicap of Greece is still there—every city must be absolutely independent of every other city; and a century's experience of Persia, reinforced by Persia's resurgence during the war, makes it plain to any who will see that such thorough-going autonomy must have its old qualification—"so far as is convenient to" the predominant power of the day. Internationally Democracy has failed. The thorough-going democrat, like the true Utopian he is, has forgotten the world outside. The prime business of every government is "a full dinner pail", if I may borrow a modern politician's "slogan". Where and how are you to fill it for a dockyard population, dependent on the ships of foreigners who use your *emporion,* when all the wheat you or your fathers have eaten for two centuries comes hundreds of miles from Southern Russia? That is the business of the State.

The full dinner pail? It was pretty empty by now. Let me quote to you an episode alleged to have taken place in the Assembly. I think it probably did not strictly take place at all, that it is mere parody; but the merest parody

must parody something. Let us hear Aristophanes first however and afterwards decide whether to believe him.[1]

Chremes: Next came Evaeon, smart accomplished chap,
Stark-naked as the most of us supposed,
But he himself insisted he was clothed.
He made a popular democratic speech;
Behold, says he, *I am myself in want*
Of cash to save me; yet I know the way
To save the citizens and save the State.
Let every clothier give to all who ask
Warm woollen robes, when first the sun turns back;
No more will pleurisy attack us then.
Let such as own no bed-clothes and no bed
After they've dined, seek out the furriers, there
To sleep; and whoso shuts the door against them
In wintry weather, shall be fined three blankets.

Blepyros: Well said indeed; and never a man would dare
To vote against him had he added this:
That all who deal in grain shall freely give
Three quarts to every pauper or be hanged.

Chremes continues with more amazing news; the Assembly has actually voted that the whole State be handed over to be ruled by the women.[2] It is surprising, but quoth the good Chremes,

Well, if it be
For the State's good, we needs must all obey.
There is a legend of the olden time,
That all the vain and silly things we vote,
All of them, somehow work the public good.
So be it now, high Pallas and ye gods!

Chremes is a good democrat, with the good democrat's invincible faith that it all comes out all right. I have read something very like it—very like it, indeed—in a book by the late Viscount Bryce, a chapter entitled "The Fatalism of

[1] Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae,* 408 ff. The rendering is mostly that of Mr. **B. B. Rogers.**
[2] Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae,* 430.

the Multitude", where he shows how in a more modern democracy the loyal citizen believes the majority is sure to go right and that it is his part to fall in, whatever his own private judgment might have been.[1]

The immediate consequence, Aristophanes tells us, of feminine government is a thorough-going system of state socialism.

> The rule which I dare to enact and declare
> Is that all shall be equal and equally share
> All wealth and enjoyments, nor longer endure
> That one should be rich and another be poor.[2]

This equality is to cover slaves, silver, land, food, clothing, wine and peanuts; and sex, especially sex—absolute equality and complete control by law in sexual relations as well as in land tenure and precious metals.

No, it was never really carried out; it was all mockery, parody, playfulness—the genius of Aristophanes. But two odd things, or three, may be noted. Socialist ideas were obviously in the air, or they could not be parodied, and they were the outcome of very general poverty. Next, *after* Aristophanes had produced his play, Plato published his *Republic,* where a great many of the things at which Aristophanes laughed are seriously discussed. The State is to arrange what it might call weddings on eugenic principles—"We shall have to invent some ingenious kind of lots which the less worthy may draw on each occasion, and then they will accuse their own ill luck and not the rulers. And I think that our braver and better youth might have greater facilities of intercourse with women given them; such fathers ought to have as many sons as possible. The proper officers—men or women or both, for offices are to be

[1] *The American Commonwealth,* ch. 84.
[2] *Ecclesiazusae,* 590 ff.

held by women as well as by men—will take the offspring of the good parents to the pen or the fold; but the offspring of the inferior will be put away in some mysterious unknown place, as they should be." [1] The third thing to note is how modern it all seems and how much less like parody since the war. And a fourth thing would be the reflection that it all amounts to a confession that democracy has failed. It failed in the war, it now fails in peace.

If you object that I am treating Comedy too seriously, I deny it outright; but, not to bicker, I will turn to Aristotle again, who is not a comic poet nor an idealist like Plato, and he shall tell us again what people were actually doing. Men readily listen to that sort of idealist talk, he says, and "are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friend, especially when someone is heard denouncing the evils now existing in states, suits about contracts, convictions for perjury, flatteries of rich men and the like, which are said to arise out of the possession of private property". We have heard it, too, this tracing of all sin to private property—but, says Aristotle, the true cause lies elsewhere, in the wickedness of human nature.[2] Ruined fortunes and revolution go together, he says,[3] but to have equality of fortunes (which contributes to peace) the legislator must fix the number of the children. "If the poor, because they are more in number, divide among themselves the property of the rich, is not this unjust? No, by heaven (will be the reply), for the lawful authority willed it. Again, when all has been taken, and the majority divide anew the property of the minority, is it not evident, if this goes on, that they will

[1] Plato, *Republic,* v, 460 A-C (Jowett) abridged.
[2] Aristotle, *Politics,* ii, 5, 11.
[3] *Ibid.,* ii, 7, 5.

ruin the State?" [1] So it looks as if re-division of property was discussed. But the actual procedure was along lines of less challenge and more security. The demagogues lay information against individual rich men, diminish their property by imposition of public services and prosecute them with a view to the confiscation of their wealth.[2] They often get property confiscated in the law courts in order to please the people.[3] In the last and worst form of Democracy the citizens are very numerous and can hardly be made to assemble unless they are paid, and to pay them, when there are no revenues, presses hardly upon the notables—for the money must be obtained by a property tax and confiscations and corrupt practices of the law courts.[4] These deliberate manoeuvres to despoil the rich in contempt of justice in order to give demagogic largess to the many are attested by Isocrates.[5]

We have, no doubt, always to qualify the laments of man as to contemporary degeneration. It may be argued, with facts to support the thesis, that fourth-century Athens was not such a bad place, that it became the centre of what might be left of Greek genius, the hearth and home of Greek philosophy. Old men are not always fair to their juniors, as their juniors are not to them, and Isocrates lived to an immense age. But picture a society where the following sentence is possible in a law court: "You must reflect that you have often heard these men tell you that if you do not condemn whom they bid you condemn, there will be no state pay for you." [6] It comes to us confirmed all round—Aristotle was not, perhaps, thinking specially of

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, iii, 10, 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, v, 5, 1, 5.
[3] *Ibid.*, vi, 5, 3.
[4] *Ibid.*, vi, 5, 5.
[5] *Peace*, 130; *Antidosis*, 164.
[6] Lysias, 27, 1.

Athens, nor was Polybius, whose retrospect on Greek democracy may suffice for this phase of our subject. He sums up in several chapters his reflections on the variety of Greek governments as a prelude to his great account of Rome's distinguishing features. He chronicles the decline of Greek Democracy, the last days of which he had seen, and he remembers many Greek states in Greece itself and in Sicily.

"When a new generation arises and the democracy falls into the hands of children's children, they have become so accustomed to freedom and equality that they no longer value them, and begin to aim at preëminence; and it is chiefly those of ample fortune who fall into this error . . . and they ruin their estates; tempting and corrupting the common people in every way. And hence, when once by their foolish thirst for reputation they have made the many ready and greedy for bribes, then democracy in its turn is abolished and changes into a government of violence and the fist (*χειροκρατίαν*). For the mob, accustomed to feed at the expense of others and to have its hopes of a livelihood in the property of its neighbours, as soon as they find a leader who is ambitious and daring but is excluded from the honours of office by poverty, perfects the rule of the fist, and uniting its forces sets in motion massacres, banishments, redivisions of the land, till, fully brutalized, it finds again a master and monarch. This is the cycle of constitutional change, the economy of Nature." [1]

Herodotus long before had lingered over the beautiful word, the most beautiful of words, *ἰσονομίη*, equality before the law.[2] But equality was an idea that men carried further, and it became ambiguous. In the old days, says Isocrates, they did not mean by Democracy mere want of

[1] Polybius, vi, 9. [2] Herodotus, iii, 80.

self-control (ἀκολασίαν), by freedom abuse of law, by equality before the law (the word of Herodotus) recklessness. There were in fact two *equalities,* one which gave the same to all, while the other gave what was fitting to each group.[1] They did not elect their officers by lot but chose the best man. Which all seems very like ordinary Toryism, no doubt, and Isocrates was already seventy-five. Some people, says Aristotle,[2] argue that those who are by nature equals must have the same right and worth, and that for unequals to have an equal share, or for equals to have an unequal share in the offices of State, is as bad as for different bodily constitutions to have the same food and clothing, or the same different. But, as he says,[3] "granted that equals ought to have equality, there still remains a question—equality or inequality of what? Here is a difficulty which the political philosopher has to resolve." But it was Greek observation that demagogues were not political philosophers, they were practical men, flatterers of the *demos.*[4] Hence "it has now become a habit among the citizens of states not even to care about equality";[5] "and in democracies of the more extreme type there has arisen a false idea of freedom which is contradictory to the true interests of the State. For two principles are characteristic of Democracy, the government of the majority and freedom. Men think that what is just is equal; and that equality is the supremacy of the popular will and that freedom and equality mean doing what a man likes. In such democracies everyone lives as he pleases (ζῆν ἕκαστος ὡς βούλεται)".[6]

[1] Isocrates, *Areopagiticus,* 20, 21.
[2] Aristotle, *Politics,* iii, 16, 2.
[3] Aristotle, *Politics,* iii, 12, 2.
[4] Isocrates, *Antidosis,* 133. Contrast the eulogy of Thucydides (ii, 65) on Pericles.
[5] Aristotle, *Politics,* iv, 11, 19.
[6] Aristotle, *Politics,* v, 9, 14-15.

And elsewhere [1] Aristotle recurs to this—"Every citizen, it is said, must have equality, and therefore in a democracy the poor have more power than the rich, because there are more of them and the will of the majority is supreme. This, then, is one note of liberty which all democrats affirm to be the principle of their State. Another is that a man should live as he likes (ζῆν ὡς τις βούλεται). This, they say, is the privilege of a freeman; and, on the other hand, not to live as a man likes is the mark of a slave. This is the second characteristic of Democracy, whence has arisen the claim of men to be ruled by none if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns." Every kind of constitution, says Polybius,[2] is exposed by nature to some form of degeneration, and the danger of Democracy is to decline into the animals' way of life, sheer brute force. They get into their heads a wrong definition of freedom, says Aristotle.[3]

Let us try again, and see what Plato says. Plato came of a family critical of Democracy; he saw Democracy go under in the war with a state founded on principle; and Demos made Socrates drink the hemlock. But Plato was great enough to see both sides of an issue and to recognize that old Demos has his points.[4] Still his picture is grim.[5] Democracy comes into being after the poor have conquered their opponents, slaughtering some and banishing some, while to the remainder they give an equal share of freedom and power. And their manner of life? In the first place, are they not free; and is not the city full of freedom and frankness—a man may say and do what he likes? There is much merit in a question. Isocrates bluntly wrote

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, vi, 2, 2.
[2] Polybius, vi, 10, 4.
[3] Aristotle, *Politics*, v, 9, 14.
[4] *Republic*, vi, 499 D ff.
[5] *Ibid.*, viii, 557 A ff.

that there is *no* freedom of speech in a democracy—*δημοκρατίας οὔσης οὐκ ἔστι παρρησία*—"all along it has been your custom to expel everybody who did not advocate your pleasures." [1] Plato follows up his question with another —then in this kind of State will there not be the greatest variety of human natures? Then it seems likely to be the fairest of States, like an embroidered robe spangled with every kind of flower—a sort of bazar where you can pick what you want, a whole assortment of constitutions, all because of the liberty there. And any man can do as he likes—hold office or avoid it, go to war or remain at peace, whatever others do. See, too, the forgiving spirit of democracy and the 'don't care' about trifles—her indifference to the training of citizens, her satisfaction in anybody who claims to be the people's friend! 'Tis a sweet form of government, anarchic, anything, with equality alike for equal and unequal.

From this Plato passes on to his famous description of the democratic man. He, too, is a democracy in himself—his mind is a democracy of inclinations, full of vain conceits that teach him to call modesty silliness, and temperance unmanliness, and send them packing, and when they have swept his soul clean of them they bring into him insolence and anarchy and waste and impudence in bright array with garlands on their heads; and he lives as he likes. One desire is as good as another, all alike, and he lives from day to day indulging the fancy of the hour, everything by turns and spasms, whatever comes into his head; his life has neither law nor order, and he answers to the State that produces him. "This absence of principle he, like the democratic state, makes into a principle." [2] He lives as he likes.

[1] Isocrates, *On the Peace,* 14; and 3.
[2] R. L. Nettleship, *Lectures on Plato's Republic,* p. 310.

And, if we count all this again a parody, let us recall the Cynic movement in Philosophy and the schools that followed—Stoic and Epicurean and Sceptic,—for all of whom the unit was the individual and not the State. Diogenes was not Plato's democratic man; he had a central idea, an idea negative of human experience, of human society, of mankind; he would live like a dog.

Let us again sum up what we have gathered. The rule of the majority was the thing—of the untutored multitude, democratic men with no clear grasp of principle but possessed of a strong sense of the advantages of living as one likes, and in lieu of principle holding the belief that the majority can do no wrong, that everything comes right. Contemporary education re-inforced the plain man in all this, or Plato would never have spent forty years in writing books against sophists and rhetoricians. But there they were, preaching Nature against law or convention, and emphasizing the individual. Small wonder if the individual accepted a gospel or a philosophy that squared so well with his natural instincts, his appetites and prejudices. Justice was the interest of the stronger. The common man chose to ignore the obvious fact that this justified every tyrant that extinguished liberty; he chose to take it as giving him his charter. The Confederacy, formed to protect all Greeks against the Persians, the Athenian turned into an Empire for himself; and, as he carried on his industries with slave labour, he made his allies support the Athenian *demos*. He limited admission to Athenian citizenship—Pericles himself did this or accepted it. He plumed himself on his City being an education to Greece, and turned it into "a coöperative society for making dividends for the citizens". He remodelled law to suit his mood. He cut himself adrift from the facts of the outside world,—Demos and Napoleon

both did it, and each paid for the awful mistake. He made a sort of Utopia of his Athens and broke down on foreign policy. The Persian found the Greeks for the moment standing unsteadily side by side; he bungled his campaign, and Greeks were free never to unite in any real spirit again, and they succumbed one by one to another Prince of less power but more judgment. Greeks talked incessantly of equality and butchered one another like French revolutionists to get it; of freedom, and lived on the labour of slaves and allies. Individualism, particularism—how shall we put it? want of outlook, *Hybris,* no sense of self-restraint, what shall we say? We may find ourselves using the language of Greek drama or of the Gospels before we are done. Greek Democracy fell for want of foreign policy, for want of intelligence of outsider and neighbour, for want of that great and peculiarly Greek gift of αἰδώς, the thought of the feelings and claims and rights of other men.

And yet, when all is said, it was Greek Democracy that gave us the standards by which we measure its failures—that gave us the ideas of law and self-government, of equality and liberty—that showed us what power is given to man, his mind and spirit—that taught us to face the universe and grasp it as a whole—that taught us the meaning of beauty and created it in its most imperishable forms—that gave us the spirit of self-criticism. Democracy is the form of government that asks the most of every citizen; the Greeks taught us that lesson in all their triumphs, and the same lesson is to read again, it is confirmed, in their failure to achieve and to maintain the ideals they saw.

T. R. GLOVER.


WITHERSPOON & COMPANY
NEW YORK